

# After 20 years, 9/11 gesture still not forgotten

## Man receives 2nd thank you for handmade crosses he brought to New York City

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Twenty years ago, Bob Figurowski of Joliet took some of his handmade wooden crosses and distributed them to volunteers and first responders at Ground Zero in New York City and at memorial tributes near the site of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.

In 2003, Figurowski received a thank you note from one of the volunteers. And he recently received another one, from the same volunteer.

The volunteer's name was Benita Kiernan. Her daughter Kristie Kiernan Bouryal has written several books for children about the events of Sept. 11, 2001: "My Buddy's a Hero - And I Didn't Even Know It," "Remembering Heroes" and "9/11 Courage and Tributes." All three books are available on Amazon.

Kiernan sent a copy of each book to Figurowski "in appreciation for your kindness 20 years ago," she said in her second thank you note to him.

"You are an everyday hero, just like the ones my daughter writes about,"



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Bob Figurowski on Jan 20 is shown holding handmade crosses similar to those he brought to hand out in New York City shortly after 9/11.

Kiernan wrote in the note. Figurowski couldn't believe it. "I'm still in shock that people can

remember you 20 years later, but these people will never forget," Figurowski said. "That was a terrible thing that

happened, that 9/11. As far as history goes, that was close to being as bad as Pearl Harbor."

Figurowski started making wooden crosses 30 years ago. When he retired, Figurowski said his brother told him to find a hobby.

So Figurowski bought a scroll saw from the former Service Merchandise store in Joliet and started crafting various crosses from wood.

"I fell right into it, being a machine operator," Figurowski said. "Of course, I had to practice. Safety first."

After the events of 9/11, Figurowski packed up some of his crosses and headed to New York City.

Kiernan's husband, John Kiernan, was a former lieutenant in New York City's fire department and had recently retired before 9/11. But she said John felt "he had to go" help with the rescue, and later the recovery efforts.

"He had worked in several fire houses and several rescues companies," Kiernan said. "So we knew so

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many of the people who had passed.”

Kiernan became one of the volunteers at Ground Zero. And she clearly remembers “the box of all the beautiful little wooden crosses” and how the volunteers could select the one

they liked, she said.

“It was such a wonderful thing he did for everybody,” Kiernan said. “I felt his crosses comforted so many people. It struck me that there were so many in the box. Nobody could believe it. There were so many different ones.”

Even Kiernan brought a cross home with her. “It’s been at my bed-

side all these years,” she said.

Kiernan said that her daughter wrote books about 9/11 for children because children should know about 9/11’s everyday heroes.

“People should know they were heroes,” Kiernan said. “Not because they passed, but how they lived.”

Kiernan wasn’t certain whether Figurowski still lived at the same

address when she sent the second note and books.

“I’d always looked at the cross and thought, ‘I really should try to get in touch with him,’” Kiernan said. “It was one of those things I was always going to do. After 20 years, I figured it was long overdue. I didn’t know if I could get in touch with him. But I felt I had to try.”